

Rep. Phil Gingrey
Opening Statement for FY09 NIST Budget Hearing
Subcommittee on Technology & Innovation
March 11, 2008

Good afternoon Chairman Wu. Thank you for convening this hearing today on the Fiscal Year 2009 budget request for the National Institute of Standards and Technology. Unfortunately, my duties with the House Armed Services Committee will pull me away from this important hearing on the most important federal agency under the jurisdiction of the Technology and Innovation Subcommittee. Therefore I'm eager to begin testimony from our esteemed panel and will keep my remarks brief.

NIST is simply exceptional in the quality and impact of its scientific research, services, and partnerships. Almost every federal agency and U.S. industry sector uses the standards, measurements, and certification services that NIST labs provide.

In 2007 alone, NIST provided over 42,000 calibration tests and reference materials across the country. Furthermore, 78 scientists and engineers from my home state of Georgia – along with approximately 8,000 scientists and engineers nationwide – collaborated with NIST throughout the year. NIST's work helps small and large manufacturers in our country compete in the emerging global marketplace, and the assistance NIST provides is critical to our 21st Century innovation economy.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased with the President's request of \$535 million for the NIST labs, which puts NIST back on the path to doubling its budget laid out in the American Competitiveness Initiative. However, it is unfortunate that the Administration has sought to end federal contributions to the Manufacturing Extension Partnership program or M-E-P. Last year at this subcommittee's very first hearing, I said that I was disappointed with the President's request of only \$46 million for MEP. Unfortunately, I am even more disappointed with the current request to end federal participation in this important program.

Mr. Chairman, MEP helps small and medium-sized U.S. manufacturers optimize their operations and remain competitive in the global economy. In Georgia, the MEP program served 834 manufacturing clients in Fiscal Year 2007 and helped create 761 jobs across the state. In my district alone, MEP has completed 20 unique projects for companies in Northwest Georgia that will help them stay on the cutting edge of manufacturing innovation.

Because of the positive impact that the MEP program has for our economy, it deserves at least the approximate \$100 million Congress has provided in recent years, and I intend to work with my colleagues to see it receives an adequate appropriation for FY 2009.

Mr. Chairman, NIST is largely an agency that does not receive its due credit for its yeoman's work across all federal agencies. I would like to thank Dr. Turner and his team for the job they do on a daily basis. I look forward to hearing from our panel, and I yield back the balance of my time.